

SOUTHERN LEHIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

SECTION: OPERATIONS

TITLE: SUICIDE AWARENESS,
PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

ADOPTED: February 8, 2016

REVISED:

<p>1. Purpose Sec. 1526 SC 24 P.S. Pol. 103.1, 248, 249, 806</p> <p>2. Authority Title 22 Sec. 12.12 Pol 207, 216, 236</p> <p>3. Guidelines Sec. 1526</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">819. SUICIDE AWARENESS, PREVENTION, AND RESPONSE</p> <p>The Board is committed to protecting the health, safety, and welfare of its students and school community. This policy supports federal, state and local efforts to provide education on youth suicide awareness and prevention; establish methods of prevention, intervention, and response to suicide or suicide attempt; and to promote access to suicide awareness and prevention resources.</p> <p>In compliance with state law and regulations, and in support of the district’s suicide measures, information received in confidence from a student may be revealed to the student’s parents/guardians, the building principals or other appropriate authority when the health, welfare or safety of the student or any other person is deemed to be at-risk.</p> <p>The district shall utilize a multifaceted approach to suicide prevention, which integrates school and community based supports. The Superintendent or designee shall develop administrative regulations providing recommended specific procedures.</p> <p>This policy shall apply in the event of an actual suicide or any situation where a student is expressing suicidal thoughts or intentions of self-harm on school property, at any school-sponsored activity, or on any public vehicle providing transportation to or from a school or school-sponsored activity. This policy shall also apply following a student’s suicide threat or attempt that does not occur on school grounds or during a school-sponsored activity, but that is reported to any school personnel.</p> <p>The district shall notify district employees, students and parents/guardians of this policy and shall post the policy on the district’s website.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Suicide Awareness and Prevention Education</p> <p><u>Suicide Awareness and Prevention Education for School Employees</u> All school personnel, including, but not limited to, administrators, teachers, instructional assistants, support staff, coaches, bus drivers, custodians, and cafeteria workers, shall receive information regarding the school district’s protocols for suicide awareness and prevention. As part of the school district’s professional development plan, professional staff in all school buildings serving students in</p>
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grades six (6) through twelve (12) shall participate in four (4) hours of youth suicide awareness and prevention training every five (5) years.

Suicide Awareness and Prevention Education for Students

Students shall receive age-appropriate education on the importance of safe and healthy choices, coping strategies, how to recognize risk factors and warning signs, as well as help-seeking strategies for self or others including how to engage school resources and refer friends for help. Lessons shall contain information on comprehensive health and wellness, including emotional, behavioral and social skills development.

Methods of Prevention

The Superintendent shall identify an administrator to serve as the district's suicide prevention coordinator. School psychologists and school counselors shall act as the individual building suicide prevention coordinators and act as a point of contact in each school for issues relating to suicide prevention and policy implementation.

Any school personnel who has identified a student with one or more risk factors, or warning signs, or who has an indication that a student may be contemplating suicide, shall refer the student for further assessment and intervention in accordance with the school district's referral procedures.

The school district shall establish a crisis response team(s). The crisis response team(s) may include, but is not limited to, administrators, school counselors, school nurses, social workers, behavior specialists, the school resource officer, members of the intermediate unit's flight team, and/or teachers and other members of the school's student assistance program (SAP). Additional procedures for the crisis response team are included in the administrative regulations.

Methods of Intervention

In compliance with state regulations and in support of the school district's suicide prevention methods, information received in confidence from a student may be revealed to the student's parents or guardians, the building principal or other appropriate authority when the health, welfare or safety of the student or other persons is at risk.

The school district shall create an emotional or mental health safety plan to support a student and the student's family if the student has been identified as being at increased risk of suicide. Parent or guardian contact will be made and the building coordinator will assist the family with an urgent referral. All documentation regarding this process shall remain confidential, as required by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

If an expressed suicide thought or intention is made known to any school personnel during school or in an afterschool program or school sponsored activity and the

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principal or designee are not available, call local law enforcement 911, Lehigh County Emergency Mental Health Services 610-782-3135, Lehigh County Crisis Intervention 610-782-3127, 1-800-SUICIDE, or 1-800-273-TALK for help.

If any mandated reporter suspects that the student's risk status is the result of abuse or neglect, that individual must comply with the reporting requirements of the Child Protective Services Law.

Notice to Parents/Guardians and Others

If an expressed suicidal thought or intention is made known to any school employee during school, an afterschool program or at a school sponsored activity and the principal or designee is not available, the parent or guardian should contact one of the emergency crisis numbers that is posted on the district's website.

Students with Disabilities

For students with disabilities who are identified as being at-risk for suicide or who attempt suicide the appropriate team shall be notified and shall address the student's needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.

If a student is identified as being at-risk for suicide or attempts suicide and requires special education services or accommodations, the Director of Special Education shall be notified and shall take action to address the student's needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.

Methods of Response to Suicide or Suicide Attempt

The first school personnel on the scene of a suicide or suicide attempt must follow the school district's crisis response procedures, and shall immediately notify the principal or designee who shall immediately notify the Superintendent. The student's parent or guardian shall immediately be notified.

If a staff member becomes aware of a suicide attempt by a student that is in progress in an out-of-district location, the staff member will:

- Call the police and/or emergency medical services, such as 911.
- Inform the student's parent or guardian.
- Inform their building administrator, district coordinator or school counselor/school psychologist.

The crisis response team will develop an action plan to guide the school response following a death by suicide. A meeting of the crisis response team to implement the action plan should take place immediately following the news of the death by suicide. Additional specific information is provided in the administrative regulations.

The school district will not create on-campus physical memorials (e.g., photos, flowers), fly the flag at half-mast, or cancel school for the funeral services because it may be interpreted as sensationalizing the death and encouraging suicide contagion.

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Any school-based memorial (e.g., small gatherings) will include a focus on how to prevent future suicides and making available prevention resources.

Reporting Procedures

The Superintendent will be the sole community and media spokesperson. Staff will refer all inquiries from the community and media directly to the Superintendent.

The Superintendent or designee will confirm the death to determine the cause of death through communication with the coroner's office, local hospital, the student's parent or guardian, or police department. Even when a case is perceived as being an obvious instance of suicide and/or being discussed openly via social media, it should not be labeled as such until after a cause of death ruling has been made. If the cause of death has been confirmed as suicide but the parent or guardian will not permit the cause of death to be disclosed, the school district will not share the cause of death, but will use the opportunity to discuss suicide prevention with the students.

Before the death is officially ruled as a death by suicide by the coroner's office, the death can and should be reported to staff, students, and parents/guardians with an acknowledgement that its cause is unknown and indicate that a sudden death has occurred in the district.

Suicide Awareness and Prevention Resources

A comprehensive set of resources for youth suicide awareness and prevention is accessible through the Department at www.education.pa.gov

Suicide Awareness and Prevention and Child Exploitation Awareness Education
<http://www.education.pa.gov/K-12/Safe%20Schools/Pages/Act-71.aspx#.Vo1ipsArKXI>

PA Youth Suicide Prevention Initiative -

Oct. 2014 Dear Colleague Letter related to peer harassment of students with disabilities:

Suicide Prevention Resource Center -

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention -

Reference:

2012 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention: Goals and Objectives for Action